

A MEMORIAL TO **Retta Virginia Stover Bauman** (1876-1961)

By *Alva J. McClain*
 February 25, 1961

The homegoing of the widow of the late Dr. Louis S. Bauman, in a sense, marks the end of a generation in the history of The Brethren Church. She was born in Palestine, Ohio, on October 10, 1876, the second oldest in a family of six children, five of whom were brothers. At the age of about twenty-five she came to the State of Washington, having been preceded by her oldest brother Will. The rest of the family followed in 1902 and took their place among the pioneer residents in the lower Yakima Valley near the little town of Sunnyside. Retta Virginia and her brother Will took up adjoining homesteads in the wheat-growing hills south of Sunnyside. Later she entered training for a nursing career, but ill health caused her to terminate these studies short of graduation—a decision which was to change the entire course of her life.

In her early childhood Retta Virginia had become a member of the Reformed Church. When the family moved to Sunnyside they attended the Federated Church, a cooperative project supported by several denomi-



Dr. Louis S. Bauman—1875-1950

nations including The Brethren Church. Upon the dissolution of this cooperative effort, the Brethren, represented by the writer's father W. S. McClain, purchased the building. Under the pastoral leadership of the late Dr. W. S. Bell, in 1911 the church called Evangelist Louis S. Bauman to conduct three weeks of services. In a very real sense, this meeting marked a spiritual epoch in the religious life of the entire community. There were approximately 300 public decisions for Christ, and many of these united with the Brethren congregation, among whom was Retta Virginia Stover (also the writer and his wife).

At the close of the meeting the evangelist suffered a brief but severe illness, and Retta Virginia (not unwillingly) was called in as a nurse to care for him. Thus began a friendship which quickly eventuated in an engagement; and one year later (1912) the marriage took place at the bride's home near Sunnyside. It was a very happy union. From its beginning Retta Virginia entered upon the career of a mother to the two children by her husband's former marriage, Iva and Paul, aged eight and four respectively. The writer was present at the wedding, and quite vividly recalls seeing little Paul, worn out by the excitement of the occasion, lying fast asleep in the arms of his new mother. Through the years of her life she presided over the home with dignity, graciousness and loving care.

After the marriage the family went to Long Beach, California, where the district mission board sponsored an evangelistic meeting for the purpose of starting a new Brethren church. The meeting was held in a tent, and



God blessed in a fruitful harvest of souls. The newly organized congregation immediately extended a call to the evangelist to remain as pastor, which he agreed to do for a period of one year. In the good providence of God this period was prolonged through the space of thirty-three years, and the original group of five Brethren there grew into a church of 1800 members. At the side of the pastor all these years was his loyal and faithful wife, Retta Virginia, who served as a deaconess through most of his ministry there. In 1948 they moved to Washington, D. C., where Dr. Bauman served as pastor of the First Brethren Church until his death in 1950. At this time Mrs. Bauman came to Winona Lake to make her home with Dr. and Mrs. Paul R. Bauman.

Shortly after the death of her husband Mrs. Bauman suffered a stroke which greatly weakened her and began a process of deterioration leading at last to a cerebral hemorrhage on February 2, 1961, thus ending her earthly life and ushering her into the presence of the Lord she loved—a state which for the Christian is "very far better." And now for her there is no more weakness and pain, no more loneliness, and the dim shadows of the mind are swept away forever.

The memorial service was held in

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the chapel of the seminary where very often during her final years we heard her glowing testimony of love for Christ, for His saving grace, for His church, and for the Blessed Hope of His coming. Pastor R. P. DeArmey was in charge and preached the sermon. Testimonies were given by Rev. A. R. Kriegbaum, Dr. R. D. Barnard, Miss Grace Byron, Mrs. Ben Hamilton, and the writer. Assisting were Dr. W. A. Ogden, Dr. L. L. Grubb, and Dr. H. A. Kent, Sr. Burial was in the historic Brethren cemetery at Germantown, Philadelphia, beside the body of her husband. This is the location of the first Brethren church in America, and also the burial place of Alexander Mack, founder of our church. Area pastors who took part in the committal service included Rev. John Neely, Allentown, Pennsylvania; Rev. Lester Smitley, Hatboro, Pennsylvania; Rev. Robert Kern and Rev. James Hoffmeyer, of Philadelphia.

Mrs. Bauman is survived by her stepson, Dr. Paul R. Bauman, through whom she has three grandchildren, and two great grandchildren. In the State of Washington she is survived by two brothers, Philip and Conrad Stover; and other more distant relatives. Mrs. John Harper (Nellie), daughter of a brother Victor Stover, and her husband attended the memorial service at Winona Lake. John Harper graduated from Grace Seminary in 1952.